

# Changing family - changing solidarity?

## The phenomenon of family solidarity<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The pluralisation of family forms significantly influences several aspects of family solidarity and the solidarity between generations. Its analysis is made difficult by its complexity: while values research into consensual and normative solidarity as well as the literature on the subject, deal with changes of emotional solidarity predominantly within theoretical frameworks, social and functional solidarity are examined through generational transfers. This paper attempts to provide an overview of the Hungarian conditions along the six interpretative dimensions elaborated by Vern L. Bengtson and Petrice S. Oyama with the help of earlier Hungarian empirical findings. The paper does not offer new empirical results; its primary achievement is being to first to approach the phenomenon of family solidarity with all its ramifications in Hungary in an interdisciplinary context. The paper also attempts to reflect upon the fact that while family solidarity is undoubtedly a positive phenomenon at the level of the individual as well as that of the family (due to its role in protecting the self, identity, and supporting existential security), from a social point of view family and generational solidarity is a significant and increasingly dominant factor in regenerating social inequalities.

**Keywords:** family, solidarity, late modernity, inequality

### 1. Problems of family solidarity in late modernity

The concept of family solidarity is used naturally in public discourse, but also often in (family) sociological discourse: it is the attitude and integrational force inherently present in families that can be activated at any time which is maintained by the family – according to its functional definition. However, when examining the phenomenon more closely, this clarity is not so evident. Are we talking about intergenerational relations, or do we have to consider the context of family law? Is family solidarity a natural phenomenon, or is it of statutory origins? In other words, is it an entirely psychological relationship which evolves in certain interpersonal relationships when one individual takes responsibility for another through personal choice? Or is it an automatism deriving from (family) statuses and social norms?<sup>2</sup>

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2 Ideas about the notion of natural family unity are called “new family naturalism” in the Western literature on the subject (Théry 2007: 159).

It is clear that since the beginning of the 2008 crisis an increasing number of people have resorted to the idea of family solidarity,<sup>3</sup> as if there has been an increase in the demand for the *institution* of the family, in parallel with the disintegration of other social communities and the decline of trust in other institutions. It is a general conviction that strengthening family solidarity strengthens society itself, which derives from the old conception that the family is the fundamental “cell” of society, and if families are strong, so is society. According to this logic, the disintegration of families endangers the integration of society.<sup>4</sup> Changes in families cannot be entirely blamed on the spread of individualism or the self-fulfilling aspirations of women (like many think); these are all consequences of fundamental social changes such as women’s paid employment, prolonged life expectancy, and the problem of single-parent families – just as the family cannot be interpreted using the nineteenth and early twentieth-century gender framework, where females dominate the private sphere of life and males dominate the public sphere.<sup>5</sup>

It cannot be a coincidence that the idea of family solidarity that supplements social solidarity strengthens when the state fails to organize intergenerational transfers well (for instance, from the old to the young, or more specifically, to the young unemployed, or the other way round): the problem of an aging society, financing pensions and social care all involve major economic issues and interests – that are disguised by the naturalistic rhetoric of family solidarity.

Based on the determining tendencies of recent years, many have argued that generational solidarity has weakened, while others claim that it has strengthened (McChesney – Bengtson 1988, Silverstein et al. 1998, Vanhuysse 2014, Chauvel – Schröder 2014, Attias-Donfut 1995). Those who predicted a multiplicity of generational conflicts presupposed the intensifying perceptions of generational injustice, as a growing number of pensioners must be supported by a decreasing number of active employees. Many have warned of the growth of ageism: the number of very old people (above 85 years of age) is increasing, many of whom suffer from Alzheimer’s disease, are stroke patients, or have dementia, all of which conditions mean a burden both at the micro and macro level on the family and society. However, the younger, fitter elderly also find it difficult to find their place in societies dominated by digitalization and a cult of the young, to which they have considerable trouble adapting (Nelson 2011, Bengtson – Oyama 2007: 13, NCPOP 2009).

3 An excellent example is the discourse about parent care.

4 This way of thinking is not unprecedented amongst some representatives of sociology of the family in Hungary, who look at the family in the spirit of the functionalism of the 1940s-1950s, and see it as something that can only fulfil its social function based on strictly distinct and complementary family and gender roles, with a constant and stable interconnection of participants that lasts until death. This conviction is further strengthened by the fact that in Hungary families that operate according to traditional gender roles are the most stable (i.e. enduring), and children are more likely to be born to such families than in ones where people choose to live together outside marriage. However, in families where the woman does not work, there are fewer children (Pongráczné – S. Molnár 2011: 99).

5 In the meanwhile, defining the notion of the family is increasingly problematic. In my paper I use it in a broader sense; i.e. to mean those who are directly related, living in a long-term relationship, or taking on the responsibility of taking care of a child.

In contrast, more tools, coping strategies and mechanisms are becoming available to handle the issue of the growing number of elderly, while new norms are developing about their social (and not only economic) participation (Sabbagh – Vanhuyse 2014, Tornstam 2005, Barrow – Hillier 2014). Others approach the issue from the dimension of normative solidarity – in terms of reciprocity, altruism, self-interest, and children’s duties –, emphasizing the power of the former, and demonstrating that while the care of the elderly can be influenced by economic factors, childcare exists even in late modernity: still more is being invested in the young by the old, and this “generational altruism” may ease the tension between generations (Barro 1974, Becker 1974, Lowenstein 2007, Lambrecht 2005, Bengtson et al. 2003, Lee 2013, Gal – Gergely – Medgyesi 2011).

It is clear that welfare transfers strongly favour the elderly, even today. This fact supports the arguments of those for whom the predestination of intergenerational conflict has been an issue since the 1980s, and which led to the problem of and the debate about intergenerational justice (Artus 2010, Vanhuyse 2014, Chauvel – Schröder 2014, Attias-Donfut 1995).

In retrospect, it is clear where the analysts went wrong. The hypothesis of intergenerational conflict is based on macro data, whereas research demonstrates the persistent presence of generational and family solidarity: on a micro level, help finds its way from the older generation to the younger in the form of voluntary support (Marshall et al. 1993, Bengtson et al. 2002). It is the application of pension systems and welfare transfers to the retired that make it possible for the elderly to help their children when it is necessary, and for the former to participate in transfer relations based on the principle of reciprocity, which ultimately lead to more frequent between-family transfers (Lowenstein 2003, 2007, Lambrecht 2005, Wisensale 2013).

## 2. Applied analytical framework – the interdisciplinary perspectives of Bengtson and Oyama

The examination and interpretation of family solidarity and intergenerational solidarity is a highly complex task. Certain aspects are relatively easy to find operational concepts for and indices for measuring. The examination of various forms of help, as well as of the frequency of social relationships, is an old field of research with many well-developed research methods. However, there are a number of features that are much more difficult to capture with precise methods; ones that can only be grasped by taking the results of other disciplines into consideration. Bengtson and his colleagues have considered multiple (psychological, sociological, economic, and communicational) aspects of family solidarity since the 1990s in an attempt to provide a more complex description of the phenomenon (Roberts – Richards – Bengtson 1991, Bengtson – Oyama 2007). The present paper aims at summarizing the state of affairs in Hungary based on the six interpretational dimensions elaborated by Bengtson and Oyama, but

in doing so, it places them alongside the peculiar problems of late modernity in the light of Hungarian empirical findings.

In this framework, emotional solidarity focuses on family members' recognition of each other and their appreciation and expression of emotional support, while social solidarity concerns the nature and frequency of family members' relationships with each other. Functional solidarity means the study of generational transfers, and economic (or other kinds of) support between generations. Bengtson and Oyama developed distinct analytical dimensions for the overlap between the views, values and aims of generations ("consensual solidarity"), as well as the expectations about the duties of children and parents; i.e., the norms relating to the importance of family values ("normative solidarity"). Structural solidarity includes "possibility structures" which create the framework for the other dimensions – for instance, geographical closeness or distance (Bengtson – Oyama 2007).

## 2. a) *Affectual solidarity*

Affectual solidarity within the family is present in most discourses in the scientific literature, or more specifically, it is clearly interpreted as a highly positive phenomenon. When seeking an academic explanation for this, psychology offers a number of alternatives – from the theory of attachment, through evolutionary psychology, to the literature on altruism –, but there is no need to be an expert to see that the elderly always invest more in the young, in the psychological sense as well. Theories of late modernity – whether they are new socialization theories, metatheories, or diagnoses of the times – also emphasize the growing importance of emotional solidarity. As external frames of reference (and thus also support) for individuals loses its relevance, so family and relationships become the location for creating ontological security and identity (Giddens 1991, 1992, Kauffman 2001, de Singly 2005, Takács 2013).<sup>6</sup> These theories claim that the nature of family solidarity is being transformed as the function of the family is changing, with emotional factors becoming more and more significant.

As for Hungary, the involvement of an emotional component in family and generational solidarity is ambivalent. On the one hand, Hungarian society is well-known for its familist system of values. The findings of network studies from the 1980s that revealed the dominance of family relationships and of traditionalism (Hankiss 1976, 1989, Hankiss et al. 1982, Angelusz – Tardos 1990, Utasi 1991, Füstös – Szokolczai 1994, Cseh-Szombathy et al. 1994, Beluszky 2000) have many similarities with the conditions that existed in the period after the millennium, as people to this day rely on family relations to a greater extent than in Western or post-socialist countries (Pongrácz – S. Molnár 1997, 2011). Value studies in Hungary emphasize the existence of a strong familist attitude: the utmost importance of the family. The idea of familism sees family as the ideal scene for altruism and solidarity, where family is the (exclusive?) source of

<sup>6</sup> Based on American value studies, Bengtson has highlighted the continuous intensity of emotional solidarity since the 1970s (Bengtson - Oyama 2007).

such values (Putnam 2000, Fukuyama 1995, Utasi 2013, Dupcsik – Tóth 2008, Füzér 2015).<sup>7</sup> Advocates of familism as an ideology in Hungary think that most Hungarian people would live their family lives according to traditional values if they could choose based on their innermost convictions, free of any social and economic obligations: the male head of the family would provide for the family financially, the wife would raise at least two or three children, and she would run the household (Dupcsik – Tóth 2008).<sup>8</sup> However, as Hungarian researchers emphasize, in such familist societies the source of familism is “Not the immanent but the relative strength of family relations and family-friendly attitudes, inasmuch as other social relations are weak and rare, are often coerced and are constantly prone to the danger of destabilization resulting from the mutual distrust of the participants.” (Dupcsik – Tóth 2008: 309).<sup>9</sup> The question remains whether the tendencies of late modernity (the transformation to production through the market economy, growing inequalities in terms of wealth, the effects of individualization as evidenced by the increase in the number of single people) are eroding earlier forms of family solidarity, or on the contrary, if they are generating self-defensive mechanisms that enhance family union, assistance, and altruism. Many argue for the presence of social anomie and disintegration; i.e., that uncertainty and hopelessness penetrates everyday life; that integration is being enhanced at a micro level due to the increase in distrust of institutions and decision makers (Utasi 2013, Albert – Dávid 2015). However, it must also be considered that “while cooperation within the family, social solidarity - more specifically instrumental assistance - [operates] well due to (...) a network of strong relations, emotional solidarity, emotional contact show[...] significant shortages” (Utasi 2002: 389).

Approaching the issue from the definition of affectual solidarity – family members’ acknowledgement, appreciation and emotional support of each other – it has to be said that this type of family solidarity is not characteristic of Hungarian families in a society that struggles with a crisis of acknowledgement in spite of its strong family values. Familism involves not only the conservation of roles but often the denial of gender equality. Sharing of work in the family is not equal; women who take on household tasks and raise children do so as a second shift, as an unpaid, socially unappreciated

7 In their paper on familism, Olga Tóth and Csaba Dupcsik highlight that familism can also be described as a social situation as well as an ideology that is typical of societies in which individuals can only rely on family relations due to a low level of personal and institutional trust. This is true not only of Hungary but China, as well as for a number of post-socialist countries where centralisation involves working traditions and practices with weak civil societies (Tóth – Dupcsik 2008).

8 In spite of the significant presence of women in the labour market in Hungary, the inequality of their share of work related to the household and caring for children or the elderly has not been questioned. According to the results of Hungarian and international values studies, Hungary is outstandingly familist, even among socialist countries. According to some data from 2006, for instance, 64% of Hungarians agreed with the statement “The husband’s role is to make money, and the wife’s is to take care of the family and the household” (as opposed to 42% of Romanians and 40% of Poles), while almost 80% of Hungarians agreed that “being in employment may be important, but most women’s real aim is to have a home and children” (58% in Romania, 40% in Poland). Moreover, acceptance of the statement that “being a housewife can be just as self-fulfilling for a woman as [having] a paying job” is almost 50%, even though the acceptance of the tradition of “husband as breadwinner - wife as housewife” weakened to some extent after the millennium, especially among the uneducated and unemployed (or those threatened with unemployment), who were forced to give up ideas deemed to be unrealistic from an economic point of view (Pongrácz – S. Molnár 2011: 102-105).

9 The discrepancy between the ideology and social state of familism and its reality is most striking in terms of the numbers of those who have children: family-centred countries such as Spain, Italy and even Hungary have the lowest fertility rates (Dupcsik – Tóth 2008).

activity. Although in certain social groups increasing numbers of couples and parents share household chores or tasks involving children, monotonous and unpleasant tasks are still largely done by women, with no appreciation or acknowledgement (Murinkó 2014, Spéder 2011, Blaskó 2006, Pongrácz – Murinkó 2009, Harcsa 2014). The enormous pressure to follow the norm of helping aging parents is “naturally” assigned to women, especially among the undereducated; such tasks in Hungary are not presently considered to be socially acknowledgeable according to mainstream discourse (Tátrai 2016).

## 2. b) *Associational solidarity*

*Associational solidarity* (i.e., relationships among family members who belong to different generations) has become more common, according to research. This is partly due to widely accessible communication technologies, and partly to the phenomenon of post-adolescence (Kacsuk 2004, Somlai 2007). For this reason it is surprising that – in opposition to all the expectations formulated in literature about the subject – intergenerational relationships are loosening in Hungary as well, and an increase in the ability to choose is becoming more characteristic, as earlier observed in Western societies. The ability to choose, which earlier was characteristic with regard to friendships, is now increasingly present in family relations – i.e., people tend to keep in touch with those family members with whom they really want to (Albert – Dávid 2015).

Similarly to generational transfers, associational solidarity is one-sided: it is parents who maintain contact with their (adult) children most intensively. Adult children are less eager to do this, which is evident as there are more loose relationships in young adults’ lives, possibly due to social contact they have with the parents of a partner, or when divorce in childhood loosens or terminates a relationship with a parent<sup>10</sup> and leads to tension and conflict between parents and the partner, as verified by Ágnes Utasi using Hungarian data (Utasi 2013). On the one hand, Utasi found that the intensity of the network of strong relationships decreased more for the younger generation than the older generation, and on the other, that there was a significant increase in the number of those who had terminated relationships, did not keep contact with and rarely and/or never met individuals with whom they are in “strong” relationships. Other research sees a significant decrease in (not only) the associational aspect of family solidarity in phenomena like the increasing isolation of single mothers, the symbiotic relationships of mother and children (that exclude the partner and/or the father), and a preference for female relations from the same age group instead of relatives (especially if the parents are still economically active, or tied up in another type of caretaking) (Gyarmati 2014)<sup>11</sup>. Associational solidarity varies in terms of social strata: Utasi’s representative study shows that relationships

<sup>10</sup> In France, 20% of divorced fathers do not see their children after the break-up of the marriage (Régnier-Loilier 2013)

<sup>11</sup> The 2011 Household Monitor (Házartás Monitor) study of confidential relationships also shows that, on average, the number of non-related confidants (i.e., voluntarily chosen relationships) has increased (Albert – Dávid 2015).

are most intensive among people with a secondary education, as family relations are most prone to be damaged among those who live in poverty, making intensive contact more difficult. Those with a degree are distanced from their families by migration, or qualifications that result in other mobility, making encounters and communication rarer.<sup>12</sup> The latest results of friendship research also show that in the past decade the number and significance of friends has increased to the detriment of family relations. This is partly due to the promiscuous nature of the labour market and an increase in precariousness, as such relationships involve weak ties and their potential for instrumentalization is becoming more valuable, along with the weakening trust among family members (Albert – Dávid 2015).

### 2. c) *Functional solidarity*

Among the various aspects of family solidarity, functional solidarity is most commonly measured; moreover, the generational transfers themselves often serve as indicators of family solidarity (cf. Krémer 2015: 195-201). A number of factors may influence the offer, acceptance and refusal of various forms of help and support. Martin Kohli distinguished financial transfers from the older to the younger generation based on the following functions: these improve the position of the elderly within the family, and in return they may expect help and care; they can control the behaviour of the young as a reward/punishment; they can help ensure the welfare of the young generation by compensating for the unfavourable effects of the market (especially in the case of disabled, unemployed and divorced children); and they reinforce relationships within the family, as well as enhancing cohesion (Kohli 1999, as quoted by Gyarmati 2014). According to the Hungarian as well as Western European literature, the direction of transfers is typically from the old to the young. As for Hungarian tendencies, “the amount of total net resources [transferred] to the children is higher (27% of the national income), than [...] to the old” (Gál – Vargha 2015: 144). In Hungary, accumulated wealth is more typically handed over to children, instead of being spent. The majority of intergenerational transfers manifest in the form of help to buy a flat, followed by everyday financial support, and help of another nature (such as cooking, childcare, or DIY). It is clear from the transfer studies that today’s generation of parents (would) find it extremely difficult to survive without the financial help of grandparents in families of low as well as high status; the loans of young people that are taken out to finance having a family are mostly being repaid from the savings of older people with adult children who are preparing for retirement.

### 2. d) *Consensual and normative solidarity*

The changes in society and the value system of the last decades have resulted in interesting tendencies in terms of consensual and normative solidarity. The former is

<sup>12</sup> Based on the findings of Ágnes Utasi, weakening social solidarity due to mobility is mostly characteristic of people living in large villages (Utasi 2013).

concerned with the differences and similarities in views and values between parents and children. Such differences may even lead to the conclusion that the conflict- (and sometimes deviance) based paradigms of the sociology of the youth are outdated. One of the most surprising findings of youth research in Hungary is the significant extent of agreement between children and parents in terms of their values, but other research involving German and French adolescents also emphasizes the existence of conflict-free intergenerational relationships, highlighting the role of repeated compromises in everyday life ( Székely 2013, Galland 2008, 2010, de Singly 2006, Martuccelli – Dubet 1996). The convergence of the norms of the young and their parents is not surprising in late modern societies. The homogenizing effect of consumer society and the enhancement of the importance of popular culture bring about the fading of cultural differences between generations, but new dependencies in terms of functional family solidarity may result in an increase in consensual solidarity. This is why it is especially interesting how normative solidarity (i.e., expectations and hopes about children's and parents' duties) are developing. The increase in consensual solidarity requires that generations agree with traditional normative expectations and duties such as ensuring children's institutional socialization and their socialization within the family, supplying emotional and financial support for the young, and caring for the old at the level of the family and society. Even if at the attitudinal level total agreement can be measured, research into everyday behaviour and Hungarian practice shows an entirely different picture. According to Andrea Gyarmati's qualitative and Ágnes Utasi's representative research, there is a clear difference in the relationships between people in their thirties and forties and their parents. The present generation of mothers rely on their parents' help in terms of childcare far less (only occasionally), and reciprocity is not so evident, either. One reason for this is the different nature of mother-daughter relationships: the latter are closer and friendlier, but also come with an element of criticism; young people let others interfere with their child-raising principles to a far lesser extent than in earlier times. On the other hand, assistance on behalf of parents to adult children (grandchildren) in terms of care is also occasional and ad hoc, and the need to be available is not evident (Utasi 2013, Gyarmati 2014). The reverse arrangement, based on the index of "children's responsibility" that is used to measure help provided to older parents, shows that in Hungary children have a lower sense of responsibility towards their parents than in other Eastern-European countries, rather similar to the younger generation of the majority of Western countries (Medgyesi 2016: 65). It is a well-known fact that a population with familist values has strongly paternalist expectations in everyday practice, so the low level of "children's responsibility" can be explained by solidarity at the system level; i.e., to expectations about the welfare services of state.

The above types of generational solidarity and behavioural types are significantly affected by the structural factors that Bengtson and Oyama define as structural solidarity. These are primarily structures of opportunity determined by geographical

closeness/distance, which have not been a major factor for Hungarian families for a long time.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, I narrowed down the scope of generational solidarity to its socio-economic determinants. The pluralization of family forms affects patterns of family solidarity at many levels. The high number of divorces in Hungary reflects a lack of solidarity between partners (or parents), and also determines the range of possibilities for single parents. Having (a) child(ren) increasingly has less of an effect on both divorces and whether parents live in a relationship (Földházi 2008, 2015)<sup>14</sup>, and more than a third of underage youngsters experience the break-up of their (step) parents. The vulnerability of relationships brings with it a rearranged pattern of family solidarity: parents, especially single parents, have solidarity with their children, not their partners (Utasi 2002). This change in the role of children within the family may further enhance intergenerational solidarity, as the majority of young people who lack a permanent relationship<sup>15</sup> can expect solidarity from their ‘mothers and sisters’.<sup>16</sup> Providing constant support for a grown up child may result in a state of mutual emotional dependence, which can lead to constraints on adult lifestyles, and a decrease in the need to “move away”.

On the whole, European and North American research describes the persistence of the value of family community and the high intensity of family relations; however, the subject of these studies is the family itself. Other studies draw attention to the fact that a lot of intergenerational relationships can be characterized by indifference and detachment, as well as conflict, while Western and Hungarian results emphasize the decrease in the number of people living in relationships (Spéder – Szalma 2015).

## Ambivalence and misuse – negative aspects of family solidarity

At the end of this paper, as a conclusion, I examine briefly how a prolonged life expectancy, changing relations and structures in the family, and changing governmental responsibility transform the mutual dependence of generations and social responsibility.

13 A number of ideas exist about the possible changes in the behaviour of young people who move abroad and start families in terms of family and generational solidarity. Measurable growth in the fertility rates of Hungarians settling down in Western European countries has been identified, but it is unclear yet whether the norms of the former concerning familial and behavioural patterns in terms of solidarity will adapt to those of the host country (e.g. mothers return to the labour market a short time after giving birth, reliance on non-relative assistance) or whether hybrid solutions will emerge (temporary or permanent immigration of grandparents, and Skype-relationships) or a possible loosening of the relationships between generations.

14 Presently, 60% of broken marriages involve children and 21% of families with a 15-year-old or younger child have a single parent, but 37% of young people between 15 and 18 had at least one period in their lives when only one of their parents was raising them (Monostori 2015). One-third of single mothers do not form a new relationship within five years. This does not automatically mean a new blended family, as some of the relationships involve ‘living apart together’ arrangements (According to Balázs Kapitány’s estimations, today there are about five hundred thousand people in Hungary who live in long-term, exclusive ‘living apart together’ relationships; Kapitány 2012).

15 Representative data from Székely 2013 [Hungarian Youth 2012] reveal that a quarter of young people between 15 and 29 have not had a relationship, 40% of people between 25 and 29 have not lived together with a partner or spouse, and nearly a quarter of young people do not have a friend they would spend their free time with (Székely 2013).

16 Fruszina Albert and Ibolya Dávid’s research shows a tendency for the mother/sister’s role of confidant to be narrowed down to female family members as confidants become increasingly homogeneous in terms of gender: a male would consider another male a confidant, while females have other female confidants (Albert – Dávid 2015).

It is widely believed that in the case of the deficiency or deterioration of welfare institutions –the weakening of organic solidarity, to use the Durkheimian expression – families are forced to rely on their internal resources and ask for help from within the family (“mechanical solidarity”). Some studies contradict this claim, and the idea of the automatic activation of family solidarity.<sup>17</sup>

In recent years it has become apparent in Hungary, as well as in other Western societies, that in contrast to expectations, a lack of services does not (and cannot) necessarily increase intergenerational transfer allocation (Jendrek 1993, as quoted by Gyarmati 2014: 52). External attempts to reinforce family solidarity on a legal basis, enhanced by the fact that a potential increase in grandparental help is available due to an aging society, represent forceful intrusions into the internal lives of families, as well as an attempt to refeudalize society. For instance, the legal regulation of parental care “as a solution” not only takes us back to the time before social insurance, but potentially dismantles family solidarity itself by introducing an outsider into the life of a family.

An increase in family solidarity may result from the weakening of society and social solidarity and can appear as a tool for overcoming social anomy and strengthening society at the same time. Family and generational solidarity, which are clearly assessed positively at a micro level, in fact serve as a major factor in the inequalities of new generations. Generational transfer studies arrive at similar conclusions regarding the decisive nature of parental assistance when starting one’s life, when entering the labour market, or when securing one’s livelihood. Clearly, family solidarity that manifests in parental help can result in the transmission of inequality from generation to generation. It is characteristic of both Western and Hungarian societies that the amount of support from the family is highest in case of young people with degrees (Medgyesi 2002), and that people in worse conditions receive neither more financial nor in-kind help from their families (Spéder 2002) – and nor can they hope to receive support from anyone else (Utasi 2013, Albert – Hajdú 2016). The sociological research into family and generational solidarity therefore is faced with the ambivalence that whilst this type of solidarity at an individual and family level can clearly be interpreted as a positive phenomenon (with its role as a supporter of the self, identity and financial security), in terms of society, family and generational solidarity are dominant and increasingly significant factors of the regeneration of social inequalities (Bourlès – Bramoullé – Perez-Richet 2016, Krémer 2015: 201). This topic, however, is outside the scope of family solidarity, as the issue of inequalities among families leads us to the problem of social justice.

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17 Andrea Gyarmati cites English-speaking studies, but the issue requires thorough investigation (Gyarmati 2014).

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